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TITLE: A Multi-Session HIV/STI Educational Prevention Program for Youth in Detention and Treatment Centers in Salt Lake County, Utah

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ISSUE: With more than 50% of people newly diagnosed with HIV being under the age of 25, this leads us to believe that adolescents are engaging in high-risk behavior for HIV. A 1996 NIH and CDC report on HIV in the Juvenile Justice System concluded that incarcerated youth often lack a sense of "personal perceived" risk and the consequences associated with high-risk behavior as compared with in-school youth. Furthermore, incarcerated youth are likely to be at greater risk for HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STI) due to higher rates of substance abuse and unprotected sexual contact. These facilities are prime settings for intensive multi-session HIV/STI education.

SETTING: Youth drug and alcohol treatment and mental health facilities and correctional facilities in Utah

PROJECT: The multi-session HIV/STI prevention program includes presentations on: contraceptives, STI teen pregnancy issues, basic HIV/AIDS facts, Person Living With AIDS speaker, skills building exercises, voluntary HIV and chlamydia testing and counseling. The sessions are approximately an hour each and may be presented consecutively over 2 days or once a week depending on the agency's programming. This flexibility helps the educators to design the sessions to the needs of the agency. The prevention message is reinforced by the collaboration of various agencies conducting the presentations. This multi-session educational program provides the participant with a comprehensive picture of the facts of HIV and STIs as well as teaches the skills to increase youth prevention behavior. A 26-question assessment tool is administered to measure knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and intentions surrounding HIV and STIs. The pre/post-tests consist of 10 questions on knowledge, 8 on beliefs, 8 on attitude, plus an additional 18 on participants' risk behaviors. In addition to the post-test, an evaluation of the topics and presenters is included to continuously improve the delivery of the program.

RESULTS: To date, the sample size consists of 87 youths (78 males, and 9 females). The mean age is 16.5 (range of 12-20 years old). The ethnic breakdown of participants is as follows: 59% Caucasian, 16% Hispanic, 8% Native American, 12% mixed or other ethnicity. A sample of 67 youth participated in a risk behavior survey. Preliminary findings include: mean age of first sexual experience being 13 years old, 51% of those surveyed have used condoms at least once, and 19.5% perceive they are at high risk for HIV infection. Among 31 youths, mean age for starting to use drugs is 12.5 years old; 10% have injected drugs; 68% reported marijuana as their drug of choice even though they had tried cocaine, methamphetamines, and alcohol. The results from pre/post test are still being analyzed.

LESSONS LEARNED: An assessment of the agencies providing and receiving education is instrumental in determining the needs and gaps in service. Evaluating the current programs and the risk behaviors of clients facilitated the development of a comprehensive multi-session program that meets the specific needs of youth at risk.

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